

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. - 14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) An image reading apparatus comprising:

an image sensor that includes:

a plurality of photoelectric conversion elements arranged in a main scanning direction, each of the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements generating an analog image signal corresponding to an amount of incident light thereon, the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements being divided into plural groups, each of the plural groups including a predetermined number (N) of the photoelectric conversion elements;

a plurality of switching elements connected to respective ones of the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements, individually;

a control unit that controls the plurality of switching elements in response to an external clock signal to simultaneously output the image signals from the predetermined number of photoelectric conversion elements in one of the plural groups; and

signal output lines with a number of N, wherein the predetermined number of photoelectric conversion elements in each of the plural groups are connectable with the respective ones of the signal output lines through the switching elements, individually, to output the image signals from the predetermined number of photoelectric conversion elements to the signal output lines;

a multiplexer connected to the image sensor for multiplexing the image ~~signal~~ transferred from one of the photoelectric conversion elements through the corresponding ~~one~~ of the ~~output~~ signal output lines; and

a sample-and-hold circuit connected to the image sensor for temporarily storing the image signals transferred from the photoelectric conversion elements in one group through the corresponding ones of the switching elements and the signal output lines; wherein the multiplexer is configured to connect with the image sensor so that one ~~output signal~~ output line connects the image sensor to the multiplexer directly and the other ~~output signal~~ output lines connect the image sensor to the multiplexer through the sample-and-hold circuit.

16. - 17. (Canceled)

18. (Original) An image reading apparatus comprising:

an image sensor that includes:

a plurality of photoelectric conversion elements arranged in a main scanning direction, each of the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements generating an analog image signal corresponding to an amount of incident light thereon, the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements being divided into plural groups, each of the plural groups including a predetermined number (N) of the photoelectric conversion elements;

a plurality of switching elements connected to respective ones of the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements, individually; and

a control unit that controls the plurality of switching elements in response to an external clock signal to simultaneously output the image signals from the predetermined number of photoelectric conversion elements in one of the plural groups, wherein the predetermined number of photoelectric conversion elements in each of the plural groups are connectable with the respective ones of the signal output lines through the switching elements, individually, to output the image signals from the predetermined number of photoelectric conversion elements to the signal output lines;

a multiplexer having signal input terminals with a number equal to N and a signal output terminal, the multiplexer being connected to the image sensor so that the multiplexer receives the image signals from the plural photoelectric conversion elements that belong to one of the groups through the signal input terminals simultaneously;

an analog-to-digital converter connected to the signal output terminal of the multiplexer for converting the analog image signal supplied sequentially from the multiplexer into a digital signal; and

resolution switching unit that select one of a high resolution mode in which all the image signals from the photoelectric conversion elements that belong to each of the groups are supplied sequentially to the analog-to-digital converter and a low resolution mode in which the image signals are thinned out and then supplied to the analog-to-digital converter.

19. (Original) The image reading apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the resolution switching unit is configured to supply the image signals received from only one of the signal input terminals to the analog-to-digital converter, when the low resolution mode is selected.

20. (Original) The image reading apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the resolution switching unit is configured to select the signal input terminals among all the signal input terminals to supply the image signal from the selected signal input terminals to the analog-to-digital converter by switching the selected signal input terminals time-sequentially when the low resolution mode is selected.

21. (Original) The image reading apparatus according to claim 18, further comprising an averaging circuit for averaging the image signals selected among the image signals received from the plural photoelectric conversion elements that belong to one of the groups, wherein

the resolution switching unit selects another low resolution mode in which the averaging circuit is used to lower the resolution of the image in addition to the high and low resolution modes, wherein

an output signal of the averaging circuit is supplied to the analog-to-digital converter when the another low resolution mode is selected.

22. (Original) The image reading apparatus according to claim 21, wherein the averaging circuit is configured to average all the signals received from the photoelectric conversion elements that belong to one of the groups and to supply the averaged signal to the analog-to-digital converter.

23-24. (Canceled)

25. (New) The image reading apparatus according to claim 15, further comprising an analog-to-digital converter for converting the image signal that is multiplexed by the multiplexer into a digital signal.

26. (New) The image reading apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the multiplexer first receives the image signal transferred from one of the plural groups through the one signal output line among the image signals transferred from one of the plural groups.

27. (New) The image reading apparatus according to claim 25, further comprising:

a resolution switching unit that selects one of a high resolution mode in which all the image signals from the photoelectric conversion elements that belong to each of the groups are supplied sequentially to the analog-to-digital converter, and a low resolution mode in which the image signals are thinned out and then supplied to the analog-to-digital converter, wherein

the multiplexer receives only the image signal transferred through the one signal output line when the low resolution mode is selected.

28. (New) The image reading apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the predetermined number (N) is at least 3.